

SON JOHN

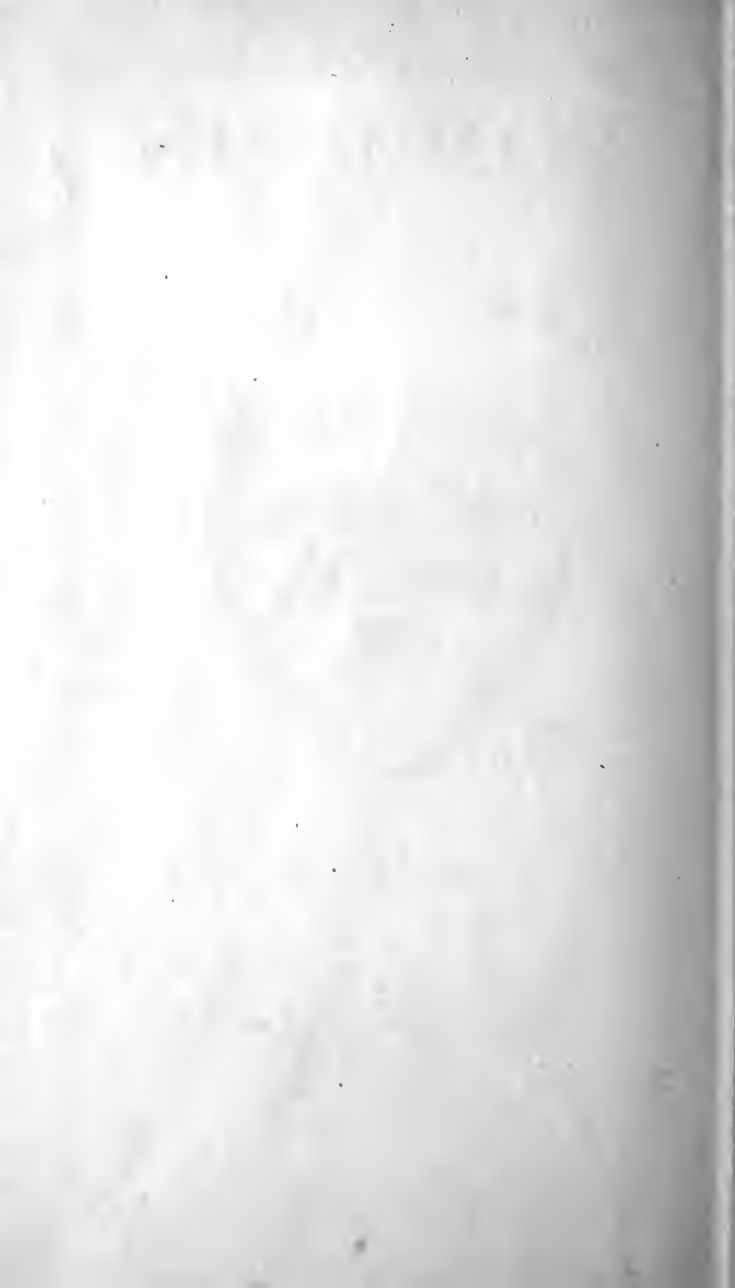
A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By W. A. STIGLER



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FOREWORD

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THE author of this play has been a Public School man for a number of years. He was led to take up the writing of plays by reason of the fact that he found it almost impossible to secure a play suited to production by the average high school class. Plays of the Shakespearean type are not practicable, and yet, something more elevated than the ordinary play for amateurs is desired. It is hoped that this play falls within the happy medium, and will, therefore, meet the demand.

COSTUMES

HIRAM—Dark suit, swallow-tailed coat. Chin beard. Same costume in all acts.

LOVEY—Old fashioned, but expensive clothes.

DICK—Light suit, brown derby, red tie, nose glasses; face powdered very white. Cane or umbrella.

JOHN—Second act, evening suit; third and last acts, business clothes.

JAKE—Goatee; slouch hat; old shirt and trousers with one suspender.

SOFIRA—Old faded blue calico; spectacles; sun bonnet.

TINY—New gingham apron; hair braided; bonnet swinging from neck.

WORDNA—Second act, evening dress; other two, street clothes.

GERALDINE—Second act, evening dress; other two, street clothes.

MRS. VAN ALSTYNE—Similar to Geraldine.

ROBERT—Second act, evening suit; third and last, street dress.

MERUSKI—Evening dress.

BONNIE—Similar to Geraldine and Wordna.

LENA—Ordinary dress of stenographer.

WAITRESS—White apron and cap.

SON JOHN

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TIME OF PLAYING: ABOUT TWO HOURS

CAST

Hiram Rogers—A Southern Farmer Who Struck Oil.

Lovey Rogers—His Wife.

John Rogers—Their Son, an Expert Violinist.

Richard Rogers—Their Younger Son, Still Green.

Jake Lindsey—Their Neighbor.

Sofira Lindsey—Jake's Wife and Boss.

Tiny Lindsey—Their Daughter, Sweet on Dick.

Wordna Howard—A Friend of the Rogers Family.

Robert Divinney—John's New York Friend.

Bonnie Burton—Robert's Fiancee.

Geraldine Van Alstyne—John's Promised Wife.

Mrs. Van Alstyne—Her Mother, After the Oil Money.

Lena Moore—John's Secretary.

Mademoiselle Meruski—John's Violin Instructor.

Waitress in Cafe.

Newsboy.

This play may well be given with four male and five female characters (by doubling).

ACT I

(Scene—Yard of Rogers' farm home. A fence may go across the stage. New chairs to right. House shows at right and back, or it need not be shown at all. Lawn swing, or settee, at extreme left in nook. If possible, cedars or other small trees should be between settee and chairs at right. Open suitcases in yard.)

HIRAM—(Comes on stage from house, shading his eyes with his hand and looking off left.) Well I'll be Johnny-jumped-up, Lovey, if yonder don't come old Jake Lindsey—that poor sucker is still a-ploddin' along a-foot.

LOVEY—(Coming sadly after him.) Now Hiram, I'd be ashamed. You know it aint been more'n a year since you was a-doin' precisely the same thing. 'Taint everybody that strikes oil under his land.

HIRAM—No, and taint everybody as is fast enough to ketch a cold, neither. I tell you, old woman, that Jake Lindsey is a back number. Why he ain't never even THOUGHT he might have oil under his land.

LOVEY—Well, you never thought on it 'till that there city feller come and told you about it.

HIRAM—Humph! That was more'n a year ago. NOW, I tell you, it's the STYLE to have oil under yer land. The feller that don't think he's got oil or somethin' or other now-a-days is a back number. Why, if Jake Lindsey was a-livin' in snail town, he'd never git arrested fer speedin'.

LOVEY—Well, I'm mighty glad the Lindsey's is a-comin' over. Sofira's a good—they're all good people, Hiram, I don't care what you say.

HIRAM—Yes, Jake's a good feller—that is, he's harmless—never did harm nobody. (Calling into house.) Hey, Dick, better go git into your Sunday clothes—here comes Tiny Lindsey over to see you. (This last remark is made as Jake, Sofira and Tiny enter from left, and is intended for their ears.)

RICHARD—(Within house.) Shuckin's, dad, I ain't got no time for the likes o' her—nothing but a city girl for me.

SOFIRA—(Shaking her finger in at door of the house.) Now, ain't that a purty come off? Jist as yer dad strikes it rich you gits so biggoty you caain't notice yer old friends!

HIRAM—That's all right, Sofira; don't you worry. He jist said that to keep down suspicion. You jist hold your hosses and see how he dolls up.

SOFIRA—(To Lovey). Where are you folks a-goin'? I see you're a-packin' up.

LOVEY—Aw, Hiram would have us go up to New York and show off before Son John. He wants ter surprise him and we ain't a-lettin' him know nothin' about it.

HIRAM—Come, Jake, 'es have a game of checkers. (They get the board and play at right of stage.)

SOFIRA—A'aint a-lettin' him know nothin' about it—how you goin' to keep from gittin' lost?

LOVEY—Why, we wrote to Wordna Howard and told her to meet us at the train.

SOFIRA—Humph, I'd think that John might come and see his old daddy and mammy, bein' as he ain't seen 'em in five years. But I guess he's so hi-falutin' he ain't very anxious.

LOVEY—Well, 'taint been so's the pore boy could come much afore this. You know for four and a half years it's took all I could save from my butter and eggs and chickens to keep him there, let alone payin' fer him to come home to us.

SOFIRA—But it's more'n six months since you sent him all o' that oil money—it's a pity he couldn't come on that!

LOVEY—Well, he says he simply cain't git away now as he is a-workin' so hard on his music. He says he's soon a-goin' ter play at some big to-do there in New York and maybe win great fame as a violinist.

SOFIRA—'Pears to me it's a mighty funny thing to spend everything on a boy jist cause he is a little sickly and don't want ter do nothin' but play a fiddle. I think he's jist a play-in' off sick part of the time—I'd a made him go to hoein' cotton or corn or somethin' or other!

(Exit Lovey and Sofira into house.)

HIRAM—I ain't a sayin' nothin', Jake, but it 'pears to me you'd better take a few lessons 'fore you set yourself up as a checker player.

JAKE—Gimme a chaw er terbacker, I'm so dry I'm about ter blow away. (Gets up, stretches and yawns, turns around, spits under a rock, then sits down again and resumes game.) Guess my luck will change now. (Pause.) Uhuh, crown my king there. Humph, jump that man—now jump this un—now I'll jist take four o' yourn. Guess that 'bout swipes yer rind, don't it?

HIRAM—(Yawning loudly.) Yep, checkers is too slow fer me now-a-days. I got to be a-thinkin' about other things. Come out here and look at my new automobile. I did think I'd have 'em run a street car line out here, but I jist bought me a automobile instead.

(Enter Richard right.)

HIRAM—(As he and Jake exit left.) Look at that poor fish! Ain't got no time fer the likes o' her, eh!

DICK—(Goes over and sits with Tiny, who continues to look down.) Hello, kiddo, have some gum.

TINY—You'd better save yer wax fer some o' them city girls.

DICK—Aw, kiddo, you know I was jist a-sayin' that to keep the old man from a-guyin' us.

TINY—Yeah, but soon's you git to the city, you'll fergit there ever wuz sich a girl as me.

Dick—Shuckin's, Tiny, you know I like you better'n any girl they is—the ain't no city girl a-goin' ter cut you out with me. Have some gum. (Tiny brightens up and takes it.) Say, kiddo, shut your eyes and I'll give you some-thin' purty. (She obeys and he gives her a bottle of perfume.)

TINY—Oh, my, ain't that fine. Gee! (Smelling it.)

DICK—(Tilting the bottle so that some spills on her.) How does she smell, kiddo?

TINY—Oh, my, don't waste it.

DICK—Shuckin's, I'll git you a lot more when that's gone.

(Re-enter Hiram and Jake left.)

HIRAM—And it cost me fifty dollars extra ter git that

'ere car equipped with a spittoon. She's a humdinger, now, Jake. You ought ter have one. Beats the old hoss and wagon out er all hollers.

JAKE—(Not interested.) 'Es have another game. (They sit and play.)

SOFIRA—(Enters from house and, catching Jake by the arm, shakes him and points over to Dick and Tiny.) Lordy mercy, Jake, you good-fer-nothin', triflin' thing—settin' here a playin' checks and them younguns over there a sparkin' ter beat the band. (Going to Tiny.) Now git up from there, Tiny, and go and hunt my specs—I must a lost them a-comin' over here. (Tiny exits left while Dick sits with mouth open.)

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin', Sofira, but younguns will be younguns and I reckon we wuz all young once. 'Taint no killin' crime fer 'em to ter spark, while we're so close, anyway.

SOFIRA—'Pears to me, Hiram Rogers, you might be a-helpin' your wife pack up instead o' killin' time out here a-playin' checks and a up-holding them younguns in their mischief.

JAKE—But Sofira——

SOFIRA—Shet up. Come into the house with me—I'll see that you make yerself useful as well as ornamental. (Catches him by the ear and leads him toward the house.)

HIRAM—Well, I ain't a-sayin' nothin'——

JAKE—Yer ain't got nothin' on me. (Exit Jake and Sofira into house.)

HIRAM—(Laughs.) Well I'll be swan-taked!

DICK—Say, dad, is that city girl we saw up at the court house 'bout like all of 'em you saw in Memphis while you wuz there durin' the war?

HIRAM—How wuz that, son?

(Re-enter Tiny left. She starts toward the house. Dick signals to her and she comes and sits with him.)

DICK—Why didn't you come and set with me, kiddo?

TINY—Cause, why didn't you go with me ter hunt them specs?

DICK—(Absentmindedly.) I never thought nothin' about it—I was a-thinkin' about somethin' else——Aw, I mean, cause I didn't want ter make yer old ma any madder'n she already wuz.

(Re-enter Jake right as though sneaking from rear of house.)

HIRAM—Wh—! I'll be John-Browned!

JAKE—How long you goin' ter be in New York? (They play.)

HIRAM—Ain't fully decided yet. Ye see we planned ter surprise John and step in on him jist as he gits up to play. By heck! Won't he be surprised ter see how his old daddy and mammy have spruced up and put on airs!

JAKE—Take yer jump. Put a crown on my king there. (They play.)

TINY—Say, Dick, did you see that there fortune teller that come through Black Stump Valley 'tother day?

DICK—(Looking off.) Naw, did you?

TINY—Yeah, I had her ter tell my fortune. Guess who she said I was a-goin' ter marry?

DICK—(Still looking off dreamily.) Dunno, tell me about it, kiddo.

TINY—You ain't a-payin' no 'tenshun to me. You're a-thinkin' 'bout what you'll see in the city.

DICK—Nah, I'm not. Tell me. .

TINY—She said I was a-goin' on a long trip, and she said I was a-goin' ter marry a man that had made a whole lot o' money, and I was a goin' ter have fine clothes, an' everything, and live in a city.

DICK—Did she say what that guy looked like you wus a-goin' ter marry?

TINY—Uhuh, she described him, and he's jist like somebody I know, too.

DICK—Who was it, kiddo

TINY—Hunkuh, I ain't er goin' ter tell.

DICK—Do! Do I know him?

TINY—I should say so. You ought to. His name begins with a D, er, I mean his nickname does.

DICK—I'll bet you it's old Drew Fagala, is it?

TINY—Nah, you know I wouldn't have nothin' ter do with him. Say, Dick, do you believe in fortune tellin'?

DICK—Not so awful much. This feller, after making a whole lot o' money might er wanted ter marry a city girl, or some society swell.

LOVEY—(Entering from house.) Richard, honey, do you want me ter put in that tie you got for Christmas last year?

DICK—Shuckin's nah, maw, put in them new ones like the one I got on that I got yesterday. The clerk at the store says they are all the rage in the city now.

LOVEY—All right, honey boy. (As she goes over towards Hiram she heaves a deep sigh.)

HIRAM—We might decide ter sell out everything here and move ter New York fer good, that is if she suits us.

LOVEY—Oh, Hiram, don't talk about that. You know I couldn't bear to give up the old farm. I'm just afraid we're givin' too much attention to frills and fineries. Sofira says we'll 'bout be punished fer it some day. I wish we wuz still pore and handn't struck that there oil.

HIRAM—Now, old woman, don't go ter gittin' peavish. We ain't a-doin' no harm jist ter enjoy ourselves.

JAKE—(Impatient.) It's your move. That there ain't a king. I jumped your king a good while ago.

SOFIRA—(Within the house.) Now, Jake, these grip-sacks is ready. You go out and make Hiram Rogers help

you put them in the automobile. Why, where has he gone to? (Appears at door right.) Well, here you are a-settin' at that there checker board again. I never saw such triflin' folks. Always a-thinkin' about pleasure and sin and wickedness. Judgment shorely will come on you, Lovey, if Hiram don't stop thinking so much about worldly pleasures. It wouldn't surprise me any day to hear Gabriel blow his horn; the Judgment day caint be fur off. (Sighing deeply.)

(Lovey weeps silently and wipes her eyes on her apron.)

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin' but——

JAKE—You ain't got nothin' on me.

SOFIRA—Git up from there, both of you good-fer-nothin', triflin' things and go and put them gripsacks we jist packed in the automobile.

HIRAM—Well, jist hold yer hosses, Sofira. We'll go as quick as we git through with this game.

SOFIRA—Lordy-mercy, did you ever hear the like o' that? Pleasure before business. (Pause—sees Dick and Tiny.) Goodness gracious sakes alive, there's them younguns a-sparkin' agin! I thought I told you, Tiny, ter go and hunt my specs.

TINY—I did start to look fer 'em, ma, and I happened to think you've got 'em right there on yer head. (laughs.)

SOFIRA—Lordy-mercy, if I ain't, fer a fact! Dick, I think yer ma wants ter speak ter you a minute. (Dick joins Lovey and they enter house together.) You heard what that triflin' thing said about you jist as we was a-comin' up. Don't have nothin' ter do with him. He's jist like his old daddy—stuck up as he can be since he made all o' that money.

TINY—But ma, look what he gimme. Don't it make me smell good?

SOFIRA—'Taint the way you smell that counts, is it? (Starts toward Hiram and Jake.)

JAKE—(Getting up and yawning.) Well that beats yer the best two out o' three. Gimme another chaw o' that Thick Plug Tinsley. (Starts to take a chew when Sofira interrupts.)

SOFIRA—Now, I'll see that you carry them gripsacks.

JAKE—But Sofira——

SOFIRA—Shet up—I've had enough back talk out o' you. (Pushing him toward the house.) Git on in there and git ter work.

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin'——

JAKE—You ain't got nothin' on me. (Exit both J. and H. into house.)

(Lovey re-enters from house. Sofira sits with her at right back.)

SOFIRA—About all Dick thinks about is sparkin' the girls. I wonder if John's as bad. Is him and Wordna Howard still a-goin' tergether?

LOVEY—No, he wrote us a good while ago that he had found a girl up there that he was a-goin' ter marry if he could git her.

SOFIRA—Well, Wordna is up there, ain't she? Ain't she been up there more'n two years a-studyin' her head off—maybe it's her.

LOVEY—No 'taint. John said that this girl's name was Van Alstyne, and that she was away up in society.

SOFIRA—Ain't that a purty come-off, turn down a good country girl that's been a-lovin' him all his life, fer some society swell that don't even know how ter sweep the floor!

LOVEY—But Wordna writes me all the time and she never says nothin' about it; so I suppose she don't care.

SOFIRA—Well, does he think he's a goin' ter git this society swell?

LOVEY—Yes, their engagement ain't been made public yet, but they've been engaged a long time.

SOFIRA—I guess they've been engaged ever since you sent John that money. (Rising.) Oh, my pore back is jist a-killin' me.

LOVEY—(Also rising.) Ain't you never been able to git nuthin' that 'ud do that no good yet?

SOFIRA—No, and goodness knows I've tried everything under the sun it seems to me.

LOVEY—Have you tried plasters?

SOFIRA—Every kind you could think uv—mustard, Jimpson weeds, fat meat, peach tree leaves, everything. And now I'm a wearin' one that Jake got from a peddler down at the store. I've had it on more'n a month, and now I caint git it off. Guess I'll jist have to let it grow off.

LOVEY—That's too bad, I do declare—I cain't git no rest from my head and heart.

SOFIRA—You pore thing. I sometimes think that maybe its the Judgment sent on you fer indulgin' so much in worldly pleasures. Have you ever tried Balmony tea fer that heart?

LOVEY—No, I ain't.

SOFIRA—Well, it's lucky I happened ter have a bottle of that in my pocket. (Producing bottle.) Now you take a tablespoonful of that after each meal. (Exit Sofira and Lovey into house.)

(Dick slips in left and sits with Tiny.)

TINY—What did yer ma want, Dick?

DICK—Aw, she jist wanted ter know what I wanted ter take erlong ter eat on the trip.

TINY—Say, Dick, how old was your ma and pa when they married?

DICK—Dunno. Don't think ma was but 17; how old wuz yourn?

TINY—Ma was 19, but pa was jist 18.

DICK—My, folks used not ter know how to have a good time, did they? They allers married too quick.

TINY—I dunno. My ma sez a person don't know how ter have a good time until they're married.

DICK—(Blowing puffs of smoke.) Too slow fer me.

TINY—How old are you, Dick?

DICK—I'm 19, be twenty next month. How old are you, jist zactly, kiddo?

TINY—I'm 18. I'm a year older'n your ma was when she married and you're a year older'n my pa was when he married.

DICK—Yeah, your pa was awful young ter marry, wasn't he? He's been married about all o' his life, ain't he? He shorely did git stung when he married! (Pause—Dick arranges his tie and dusts clothes.)

TINY—Say, Dick, t'other day I asked ma to tell me all about her's and pa's courtship—how he ast her to marry him and everything.

DICK—(Yawning.) Must a been awful dry to listen to, wasn't it?

TINY—No, 'twas interesting. They'd been a-goin' together for a long time and he was a-goin' away, so he ast her to promise to marry him so's nobody could cut him out while he was away.

DICK—Did she do er, kiddo?

TINY—Yeah, but not at first. She waited awhile jist to git him to beg her and then she did before he left. (Pause.) Say Dick, did you know Rube Martin was a-wantin' to be a-goin' with me while you are in New York?

DICK—(Primping.) Nah, you never did tell me nothin' about it. But I guess he'd about suit you—er, I mean, what did you tell him?

TINY—Well, I told him I didn't know nothin' to keep me from it. I WASN'T ENGAGED TO NOBODY YET. (Pause. Loud gum chewing.) Dick, do you want me to be a-goin' with him?

DICK—(Yawning.) Makes no difference to me—er, I I mean, course I don't. I don't want nobody to cut me out with you while I am away.

TINY—But what can I tell him? I can't say because you and me is—you know what—cause we ain't—
(Sofira and Lovey re-enter from house.)

SOFIRA—Lordy-mercy, if they an't at it again. Now you two come right over here and set with us. (They obey.) I do declare, Lovey, this world's a-goin' to the dogs fast. Here's these two younguns a-wantin' to spark all the time when they're jist babies yet. Ain't that a purty come-off! (Re-enter Jake and Hiram, right, smoking cigars.) There them men is a-wastin' money a-smokin' them costly cigars. Did you ever hear of sech extravagance! I tell you, Lovey, the Lord will punish sech doin's. I jist look fer the end of the world to come every minute. (Both women sigh deeply.)

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin', Sofira, but it pears to me you look on the dark side of things—you kinder skewer a feller up.

SOFIRA—I'd love ter skear you up and git you ter turn from your sin and wickedness and escape everlastin' punishment. Now you have a blessed little woman and you ought ter try to be good enough for her. I caint never find nothin' in Lovey's life to reprove her for, no matter how hard I try; and goodness knows I try hard enough—she's jist that good, pore thing.

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin'——

JAKE—you ain't got nothin' on me.

(Dick and Tiny slip off to seat at left.)

SOFIRA—Jake, you give Lovey some money to git some things I told her to git fer me.

LOVEY—you better tell 'em again and lemme write 'em down. I might fergit some of 'em, everything will be so strange. Lemme have your pencil, Hiram.

SOFIRA—(Slowly.) Well, three and a quarter yards o' gingham, blue like this dress I got on; one pair of black stockings; two yards of red ribbon; five yards of bed ticking six yards of eight ounce ducking, enough red calico fer a quilt top—you might git enough of that fer Tiny a dress; a pair of Sunday shoes fer me; a box of shoe blacking; a milk bucket; two big crocks; a dozen half gallon fruit jars and a molasses pitcher. Now mind you, go to one of them there stores where they're a'havin' sales on.

HIRAM—Yep, I wrote up there to the mayor of New York to tell him I was a-comin', and I told him ter send me some advertisements from some of them stores what had sales on, so's we could jist pick out what we wanted. But you know, he ain't never answered my letter.

SOFIRA—That's jist the way with all them biggotty town dudes—they're all alike.

HIRAM—Come in the house a minit, folks, I got to have a last look at that cider barrel. (They exit into house.)

DICK—(Grinning.) Now, kiddo, don't you let no guy cut me out with you while I'm gone, 'cause I might couldn't git no city girl——er, I mean, 'cause if I thought somebody was a-beatin' my time, I couldn't stand to be away. You won't, will you, kiddo?

TINY—Nah, and don't you fergit me, Dick. I'll be awful lonesome.

DICK—Here's my picture (giving it). You can look at that when you git lonesome. Now, kiddo, (bashfully) you're a goin' ter gimme somethin' before I go, ain't you?

TINY—Hunkuh, I cain't do it, Dick. (Pause.) What did you want me to give you?

DICK—Aw pshaw! you'll gimme jist one, wont you? Jist think, I'll be gone a long time. Gimme jist one.

TINY—One what, Dick?

DICK—Lock of your hair.

(Re-enter Hiram, Lovey, Jake and Sofira from house.)

LOVEY—Well, Hiram, let's be a-gittin' on to town, or we're liable to miss our train. I don't want us ter have ter drive as fast as we did t'other day.

HIRAM—Yeah, guess we'd better be a-goin'. I think we got plenty of time—we can make 26 miles in three hours. Goin' some, eh, Jake! Beats the old ox wagon out er all hollers.

LOVEY—Now don't you git careless, and git in with any confidence men, and don't talk to no strangers, and be careful when you start to cross the streets, and don't eat nothin' that'll make you sick, and keep your hand on your pocketbook while you're in the city, and watch out fer the fellers that wears broad rings on their fingers, for they're crooks, sure. And, Lovey, you keep a good eye on Hiram, fer he'll try to do something smart, I know. You ought to watch him like I do Jake. I'll bet that mangy critter never gits ter thinkin' about no giddy girls—I ain't trained him thataway.

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin'—

JAKE—You ain't got nothin' on me.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

(Scene—Room in fashionable home in New York. Settee at right; large chairs at center and left; punch bowl in center; palms or flowers. John discovered standing behind Geraldine who is seated at left. Mrs. Van Alstyne seated on settee.)

MRS. VAN—I hope, Mr. Rogers, you appreciate the great favor we have shown you in securing the invitation for your friend. Girls of her station in life are seldom invited to homes of this kind.

JOHN—You forget, Mrs. Van Alstyne, that I am also from a low station in life, if by low you mean poor. Miss Howard and I are of the same stratum—both born of common parents in humble homes.

GERALDINE—But you know that you by your own efforts and by your immense wealth have well deserved recognition in the highest society.

MRS. VAN—Yes, for you are about to be hailed as America's greatest violinist.

JOHN—That is if I show myself superior this evening to those who are to compete against me. But you must remember that I am to meet some very good men—men who already have national, and even international, fame.

MRS. VAN—Oh, you'll succeed. Too much—everything—depends upon your winning that medal this evening.

GER.—You have been wanting to know when we would make our engagement public; win this evening, and it will be announced tomorrow.

JOHN—And if I fail——

MRS. VAN—You realize, Mr. Rogers, that my daughter will be giving to the man she marries a name that is centuries old. Scores of men are seeking her hand. Therefore, the man she marries must show himself of unusual worth.

JOHN—I understand that unless I win this evening, I am not to hope for Geraldine's hand.

MRS. VAN—That is just it, Mr. Rogers. (Rising.)

GER.—And don't think that it is because I think less of you, if you fail. Only you know so much is expected of me that my husband must be both wealthy and famous. (Rising.)

JOHN—I'll do my best. (Exit left.)

MRS. V.—You did well, my daughter. If he does not win, it will be because he has not the ability; for he will surely do his utmost.

GER.—But you know, mother, he is so proud, if he fails, he might leave without asking again; and you know we must have our share of that oil money. And it seems that the only way is for me to marry him.

MRS. V.—Ah, never fear; he'll come back.

GER.—But after what has been said, he could have no REASON for doing so.

MRS. V.—He loves you, daughter,

And LOVE and REASON never act as one.

GER.—But he, perchance, may think himself unworthy.

MRS. V.—Profess it, never think it—just as we

Proclaim ourselves unworthy of our God,

Yet never has a mortal gone so low

That he will out of love for God refuse

To claim His Grace. So he, though vowing his

Unworthiness, will justify himself

By saying that his overpowering love

For you will call forth superhuman deeds

And make him for his lovely queen a king.

GER.—Listen, mother, I have just thought of a plan. I simply cannot stand to think of marrying him—the very thought of his low birth makes him repulsive to me. Now, no one has heard what has just passed between him and us. Suppose he does not come back and we sue him for breach of promise.

MRS. V.—Fine! With our prestige in society we could get a million. Even if he wins, we might find some other excuse to make him break the engagement. No one would ever doubt our word.

GER.—I have never been able to see how I could afford to give George Arnold up just because he is poor; now I can get him and John's money too. (Exit Mrs. V. and Geraldine left.)

(Enter Robert and John center.)

ROBERT—John, old man, why are you so glum tonight?

JOHN—Robert, do you realize that this night marks the climax in my life?

ROBERT—Don't take it so seriously, old man, (putting his hand on John's shoulder) and you'll do better. Just play as though you were a thousand miles from nowhere. Play as you do when you are sitting alone with Geraldine and pouring out your soul in music.

JOHN—I wish that I could, but I simply cannot shake off this feeling of self-consciousness. I haven't felt as I do now in months. I thought I was proof against this sort of thing.

ROBERT—I wish that you felt as much confidence in yourself as I feel in you.

JOHN—Perhaps it does not mean so much to you whether I succeed or not.

ROBERT—Now look here, old man, you're just a little pessimistic tonight. It is unkind of you to talk that way. You know that I am more interested in you than I am in myself.

JOHN—(Half hearing him. The following lines may be said to low music.)

It means so much to me. When as a lad
With feeble health, I found the labor on
The farm too strenuous, I used to spend
Unnumbered, lonesome hours in dreaming how
I some day might be powerful and bring
The world a blessing through my suffering.
To while away my tortured hours, I played
A violin an uncle gave me. Love
Of music soon possessed me and I lived
With but one aim, and that to be a great
Musician. No one knew—save one dear soul—
How hard I worked. But SHE was ever with
Me. When I wished to study here, she gave
Up everything that I might come. And through
These years always her guiding hand has led
Me on.

ROBERT—Who is this person, John.

JOHN—My mother—

Though crude, uncultured and untrained in speech,
Yet sweeter, truer soul ne'er burned within
A breast.

ROBERT—And 'tis for her you care so much?

JOHN—Besides, it means for me a life career;

I've staked my all on this. I'd never have
Another opportunity to win
A place among the artists of the world.

ROBERT—But even if you shouldn't, what of that?

You have everything you need, for you
Have money, fame, and friends; and you have won
The promise of the girl you love.

JOHN—I haven't all of these. I have money, but the love and friends of which you speak are merely lent me, if I fail tonight. For then my dream of fame will change to a horrid nightmare and my love and friends will turn from me.

ROBERT—It is not for me to say what effect your failure would have upon Geraldine. But she should stand by you at least as closely as your friends. And let me tell you, a true friend is not made out of that kind of material. (Enter Wordna who stands unobserved.)

There is no art in being a friend,
As folks sometimes may say—
It's only a farce when one's your friend
To make your friendship pay.

A friend needs not your tactful ways,
Or tritely chosen speech;
He doesn't ask to know your aims,
Or the goal you try to reach.

He doesn't wait your listening ear
Before he speaks your praise;
He doesn't wait to know you're right
Ere he defends your ways.

A friend knows all your weaknesses,
And knows your doubts and fears.
He knows just where your worst fault is,
And where your strength appears.

As a rose absorbs a ray of light
And reflects the loveliest hue,
He mirrors the best that's in your life
And shields the rest from view.

JOHN—Well said, old man, and I know you really feel that way toward me.

WORDNA—(Coming forward from concealment.) And let me say a word in behalf of Miss Alstyne, John. Your place in her affection surely does not depend upon the outcome of tonight's playing. If she were here now, and could see you in this mood, I'm sure she would say to you:

(This song may be sung as solo, or with parts, or spoken to low music.)

You need not win the world's esteem,
Nor die a lost cause to redeem;
You do not need to bring me gold,
I do not ask for titles old.
You do not need an artist's skill,
Or singer's voice or poet's quill;
For these the world claims as its own—
I want you for yourself alone.

I wish that in some far off sea,
An island stood for you and me;
Unburdened by man's discontent,
A land without a precedent;
Where free from hollow selfish pride,
Our love would be our only guide;
And in that eden all our own—
I'd love you for yourself alone.

And there beneath some shady tree,
I'd draw your head down close to me,
And whisper words of love for you;
For everything you'd say and do,
For every feature of your face;
For every kingly act and grace,
For every kindness shown,
I'd love you for yourself alone.

JOHN—Wordna!

ROBERT—And if she spoke that way, I'm sure you could never doubt. Your very soul seemed in those words, Miss Howard.

JOHN—But I can't agree with you and Robert, on this point, at least. My place with Geraldine as a suitor for her hand, and with you, Robert, as your friend, was given me by my efforts in music. Now if it should be shown tonight that my efforts were not as fruitful as I had hoped, I then have no claim on your affections.

WORDNA—It would only bring them closer to you, John, for then you would need their friendship more than ever.

JOHN—Yes, as a beggar in the street needs food to keep himself from starvation. I don't like to hear people say that they will be friends of a person as a matter of charity. (Exit abruptly left.)

ROBERT—He's a strange fellow—grows more puzzling every day.

WORDNA—John has changed so much. He's not like the same person he was six years ago.

ROBERT—Few of us are. But I didn't know you had known him so long.

WORDNA—We were playmates together.

ROBERT—Listen, Miss Howard, pardon my saying it, but I have made a little discovery here tonight. I have seen that there is a girl in love with John who is much more worthy of him than is Geraldine Van Alstyne.

WORDNA—Why, Mr. Divinney, what do you mean? I—I—

ROBERT—Yes, you are the one. You may not have known it, but those words of yours came from the very bottom of your heart.

WORDNA—(Speaking to herself.) Not known it! I thought my love for him had changed to unselfish friendship, but I see it has not. (Going.)

ROBERT—(Stepping in front of her.) Just a moment, Miss Howard, I want to talk with you. I fear that Miss Van Alstyne does not feel toward John in a way that a man's promised wife should feel. I don't think your song expressed her feelings very well. To be frank, I am sure that she is after his money.

WORDNA—I too, have felt this.

ROBERT—Haven't you good proof of it? Haven't you seen her and George Arnold together often?

WORDNA—Yes, and I have heard their names linked together a hundred times——of late, especially.

ROBERT—I'm afraid they're planning to give him a crooked deal.

WORDNA—Why, what do you mean? Do you think she really doesn't intend marrying him?

ROBERT—She intends to have a large share of his money. If she has to marry him in order to get it, she'll do so—but that will be her last resort.

WORDNA—But she could never get it any other way, could she? John would never give her cause to bring suit against him.

ROBERT—They might force him to do so. If anything turns up, they'll take advantage of it and make him break his engagement; then, with their good name to back them, sue him for doing so. I must be prepared to help him. By the way, the law firm you are connected with does Arnold's business, doesn't it? How is he fixed financially?

WORDNA—He is on the verge of bankruptcy. (Going right.) I do hope you can help him. If I can be of service, call on me. (Exit right.)

(Enter Bonnie unobserved. She hears John's next speech.)

ROBERT—What a lucky dog John is. Now why was I never blessed with the love of a girl like that?

BONNIE—Indeed, my dear sir, quite a compliment to your fiancée to hear you wishing for the love of another girl.

ROBERT—Pshaw, now Bonnie, don't get angry; you know I was only joking. You know I'm not worthy of the love of a girl like her.

BONNIE—Oh! that is worse still. Not worthy of Miss Howard, yet you never trouble yourself about being worthy of me!

ROBERT—Oh, say, let me explain—you know I didn't mean it that way.

BONNIE—Don't trouble yourself to explain. I shall never speak to you again.

ROBERT—Oh, is that so!

BONNIE—Yes, THAT'S so. And let me tell you another thing—I'm NOT going to give in this time.

(Bonnie sits at left and looks away from Robert who sits at right. Both pout. Robert looks longingly at Bonnie, but, as soon as she turns and looks at him, he quickly looks away. Bonnie looks until he again turns toward her, then looks away. This alternate looking is kept up for a short time. Bonnie gets up and picks up a rose from the floor at center. She glances mischievously at Robert, then screams as though she has stuck her finger. He rushes to her side.)

ROBERT—What's the matter, Bonnie?

BONNIE—(Giving him her hand.) Oh, I hurt my finger!

ROBERT—You didn't mean what you said a while ago—did you? It seems that I have been separated from you for years.

BONNIE—Oh, Robert, let's never, never quarrel again. (They exit left.)

(Enter John and Mademoiselle Meruski center.)

M. M.—See, monsieur, they cannot help but recognize your superiority. You have been living your violin.

JOHN—And you, dear Mademoiselle Meruski, have been giving me the very best instruction possible. If they do not, it will not be because you have failed in your part.

M. M.—Ah, I can only work as my pupil inspires me. I have given you most of my time because you showed such great ability.

JOHN—I thank you.

M. M.—When you start on our own production, our masterpiece, they will be spellbound!

JOHN—And now you will stand just where you are, so that when I am playing I may see you. It will give me greater power.

M. M.—Go now, they're beginning. Go, and success crown your efforts. (Exit John left. M. M. paces floor nervously while soft violin music comes from the left wing. She speaks to its tones.) Ah, tonight for the first time my soul is to be revealed! All my life I have felt that my heart-strings were a violin. How I have longed to sit in some secluded place and pour forth my soul in music. And yet that childhood accident which robbed me of my fingers has prevented my doing so. And now the fire which I have kept within me all these years is to burst forth tonight. This is the time I have lived for—when someone should express my feeling. (Music changes.) Ah, he is beginning now. (Pause.) Oh, ze wonderful strains! It ees beautiful as ze greatest painting! (Clasps hands.) It ees like a most delicate vase! How he plays! (Pause.) Now, ze climax! How he holds us up—up—up. Be careful, don't break it yet! Ah! (Falls fainting to settee.)

(Enter John on run from left. He picks her up.)

JOHN—Oh, Mademoiselle Meruski, see (pointing to

medal.) This means that the National Music Association has this night declared me the greatest violinist in America! (Enter Robert, Bonnie, Wordna, Mrs. V., and Geraldine left.)

ALL—Three cheers for the American Stradivari!

MRS. V.—We're so proud of you, Mr. Rogers.

(Hiram, Lovey and Dick bustle in from right.)

HIRAM—Yes, and we're proud of you too, ain't we, Lovey? I don't know what you've done, but I'll bet er chaw er terbacker she's all right.

(John is dumfounded and tries to keep the others from seeing. Wordna tries to coax Hiram and Lovey out at right. As they get to the door, she turns and faces the rest.)

MRS. V.—(To Hiram.) Who are you, sir?

WORDNA—These, laides and gentlement, are my father and mother.

(John springs forward and tries to speak, but she silences him with a knowing look.)

HIRAM—Well, I'll be John-Browned, gal, what do you—(Wordna covers his mouth with her hand.)

MRS. V.—(To Wordna.) Take your low-lived ancestors and leave, impostor!

WORDNA—(In an undertone to Hiram and Lovey.) Don't say a word. Do as I say. It means John's happiness. (Aloud.) We wish you all good night. We will leave your bloodless life forever. (Exit.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

(Scene—Portion of fashionable cafe in New York showing three tables. One is at left front, one near center, and one at rear right. Palms or decorations partly exclude tables at extremities from view of each other.)

(Enter Wordna, Hiram, Lovey and Dick, left. They sit at table at left. Hiram and Dick keep their hats on.)

WORDNA—I'm so glad I found you last night. I missed you at the station. We will have lunch, then I shall take you to John's studio.

HIRAM—What did you mean, gal, by claimin' me and the old woman fer yer daddy and mammy and then a-run-nin' off with us thataway? I thought you and John had quit long ago.

WORDNA—John was so nervous and excited I wanted to give him time to relax before having you. Besides I wanted to have time to give you some suggestions about the customs of the city. I can be of a great deal of help to you, since you do not know New York.

HIRAM—Yep, I know I'm a rube now, but you jist wait; in a few days I'll know ole New York like a book.

DICK—Say, dad, 'es hang our hats on them contraptions back there.

HIRAM—Good for you, son. You're a chip off the old block—always a-lookin' out fer things. (Dick hangs hats up.)

LOVEY—I ain't a-feelin' very well. So much noise and bustle is too much fer me. I feel faint.

WORDNA—I'm so sorry. Try to get used to the noise and you'll soon feel better. I brought you to this quiet place so that you could rest.

LOVEY—I don't think I can rest—it's my heart.

HIRAM—Now, old woman, cheer up. Don't spoil our first day in real society by feelin' bad. Jist open up and take 'er all in. Some swell place ter eat in, eh, son?

DICK—Suits me all right.

HIRAM—Wonder if I could buy this place—wonder how much they'd take fer it?

DICK—Dunno, but if some of them purty gals that is a-waitin' on the tables goes with it, I'd shore love fer you to try.

LOVEY—'Taint right fer you to be a-talkin' thataway, Richard, when you left pore little Tiny at home a-thinkin' about you.

DICK—Huh, you don't think she could hold a light to none of these swells, do you? No country bird for me!

LOVEY—Country folks is all right. I do wish we hadn't a struck it rich and was back on the old farm jist like we was.

WORDNA—Excuse me just a moment. I see a party to whom I must speak a few words. (Exits left.)

(Waitress appears from left. She leaves pads and pencils and places menu cards. All stare at her with open mouths.)

HIRAM—Now what do you know about that, son. Some pretty girl, eh!

DICK—Suits me all right, but I kinder believe she's biggity—she didn't say nothin'.

LOVEY—Sofira says that's the way with all these city folks—so biggity they won't have nothin' to do with good honest people.

HIRAM—Perhaps she's deaf, cain't hear nothin'.

DICK—That's about it. See, she left these pencils and tablets for us to write on.

HIRAM—(Picks up card and tries to read it, holding it at arm's length. He places a large pair of gold rimmed glasses on his nose and they fall off. He replaces them, and holding his head back to balance them, reads.) Well, I'll be Johnny-jumped-up, if it looks like we're goin' ter git very fat in here on butter and water, and not much of that. Lovey, can you make out what this here card means?

LOVEY—(Holding her head between her hands.) I ain't a-tryin'. I don't feel like it. You all go on ahead and eat. I don't keer fer nothin'.

DICK—(Polishing glasses on his napkin.) Why, ma, you ain't et nothin' 'cept what we brought from home.

LOVEY—I reckon I can make out until we git home agin. If only my heart 'd quit botherin'.

HIRAM—Well, I ain't a-sayin' nothin', but I cain't make a bloomin' thing out o' this card. I cain't tell whether it's a program er a bill of fare. (Waitress passes by from left.) Guess I'd better write and ask this here deaf girl.

DICK—Shuckin's, dad, that's too slow. I'll talk to her on my fingers. (Makes signs. Waitress smiles and passes on. Dick jumps around in his chair bashfully.)

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin', but I'm a-gittin' mighty blamed tired of this. I'm hungry. (Looks off left.) Hi, there! Hold on a minute!

(Rushes out left and soon returns, carrying a large sack of bananas which he passes to Lovey and Dick. They peel and eat, country style.) I'll be John-Browned of I'm a-goin' ter be beat out er my dinner by all this fol de rol, red tape er society.

LOVEY—Maybe if I could git a cup of coffee my head 'ud git easy.

HIRAM—If Wordna had only allowed me ter bring our gripsacks along, we had some of that coffee in that there fruit jar that we brought from home.

DICK—Well, you see, dad, Wordna says you don't carry yer gripsacks with you all around over the city. And we got to be in style, you know.

HIRAM—I tell you, I've about decided I'd rather be in good health than ter be in style. And the two don't seem to go very well together here. (Enter newsboy.) Here, I'll take some—how much are they? Why you look like you was hungry. Where do you eat, here in town? No wonder, then; you ought to be starved to death. (Giving him a bill.) I'll take all yer got. Jist pitch 'em on the table—they ain't a-goin' ter bring us nothin' ter eat. (He and Dick take one each and read. Exit newsboy. Lovey rests her head on her hands.)

DICK—The ain't no use a-readin' the news, dad; we're right in the midst of where she's a-happening, so what's the use of reading about it. You look out fer a good show.

HIRAM—Yeah, you'd better be a lookin' out ter see where the mayor lives so I can see him about them stores.

DICK—Shuckin's, I can see about that later on. I've got to look fer me a good party to go to. I've got ter git into society, I tell you.

LOVEY—Don't fergit what Sofira and Jake told us about lookin' fer a place that has sales on. We mustn't fergit our friends down on the farm. Oh, goodness! my head.

HIRAM—Fergit yer head a little while, old woman, and think about your stomach. If it was as empty as mine is you would. Mine ain't got nothin' in it, 'cept six bananers and some peanuts and that air cud er terbacker that I

swallowed a while ergo while I was a-lookin' to see how tall that building was.

(Waitress re-appears left.)

HIRAM—(Rising and reaching in his pocket.) Well, Miss, we enjoyed our butter and worter mighty well. Now, if you'll bring us some toothpicks, I'll pay you fer our dinner.

WAITRESS—You haven't indicated your order yet. (Takes pencil and writes.) Now if you'll tell me what you wish.

DICK—Wish, shuckin's, what do you suppose we come in here for, ter water our horses? We want something ter eat, eh, dad?

WAITRESS—(Smiling.) All right, what will it be?

HIRAM—We want four of the best square meals you got in the house and we don't care what they cost, neither. We got the money ter pay fer 'em too. Here's a little somethin' fer yerself Miss, ter pay yer fer takin' away them bananer peelings. (Giving bill.)

WAITRESS—(Delighted, smiling.) Oh, thank you, sir. I'll see that you get what you want. (Exit left.)

DICK—(Jumping around and twisting his coat.) Man-kind, dad, did you see that grin? Ain't she a dinger! I got ter make a hit with her.

HIRAM—I ain't a-sayin' nothin'.

(Re-enter Wordna left.)

WORDNA—(Sitting.) I regret that I had to be away from you so long. Did you put in our orders?

HIRAM—You bet we did, and that little humdinger of a waitress said she'd see that we got er, too. I think she kinder likes Dick.

DICK—Now, dad!

WORDNA—I'm so surprised that you did not write John that you were coming and have him meet you at the station and take you to his rooms at once.

HIRAM—Well you see, we wanted ter give the boy the surprise of his life—wanted jist ter step right in on him, like we did last night. And then we wanted ter have a few hours to git our bearings in the city 'fore we saw him, so's we'd feel at home.

LOVEY—I ain't never goin' ter feel at home. No place'll seem like home to me 'ceptin' the old farm.

DICK—Shuckin's, ma, you'll git used ter this soon.

LOVEY—Hunkuh! Won't neither. Besides I ain't a-goin' to have good health here. And the people don't seem to be very neighborly, neither.

WORDNA—How did you ever hope to find him?

HIRAM—Well, we planned 'er like unto this. We'd git here about one o'clock and we'd walk around all over the city till long about four, and then we'd look John up. But we wouldn't let him see us. We wanted ter foller him to that there place where he was a-goin' ter play and go in on

him there. But you know we jist walked our heads off and never could git very far from the same place—leastways all the streets looked alike. And I tell you we was jist about tired out when we happened ter see John through a winder of that fine house.

DICK—(Looking at the paper.) Now what do you know about this? If here ain't John's picture in the paper. My, but he's got on some swell clothes—jist like them he had on last night. It says: "Miss Geraldine Van Alstyne, the prominent social leader, is to be married to Mr. John Rogers, (Wordna turns away in pain) son of a southern oil king."

HIRAM—Going some, eh!—Southern Oil King—that's me! I'll go around tomorrow after we've had our pictures took and have this here feller that runs this paper print my picture, saying that this is the oil king that he was a talkin' about. But read about this Miss Van Alstyne—this picture don't show her to be very good looking—why it's the same girl we saw last night!

(Waitress brings food from left. They eat. Hiram and Dick using bad table manners. After a few minutes John, Mrs. Van Alstyne, Geraldine, Bonnie and Robert enter center. Robert and Bonnie sit at table at center, the others at right. Usual business of ordering.)

MRS. V.—So kind of you, Mr. Rogers, to invite us out to luncheon today. We weren't expecting it. It is so pleasing too, for us to be seen together the day your engagement appears in the papers.

GERALDINE—How did you manage to get so much space, mother? Two whole columns!

MRS. V.—Mr. Rogers deserves credit for a great deal of that. His success of last evening made it easy.

JOHN—I feel quite an impostor, Mrs. Van Alstyne, to read in the papers that I am of an old aristocratic, Southern family of the great plantation days, whose ancestors were of the noble families of Europe.

MRS. V.—But it is absolutely necessary that it be understood that way. Geraldine could never become the wife of one who was known to be of common parents.

GERALDINE—Yes, my dear, New York must never know that this article is untrue in the slightest detail.

BONNIE—Robert, who on earth are you smiling at?

ROBERT—Nobody. Now don't get jealous.

BONNIE—Jealous indeed! (Looking back and seeing Wordna.) Oh, I see, Miss Howard! Perhaps, sir, you are trying to become a "lucky dog" yourself.

ROBERT—Now listen, Bonnie.

BONNIE—I don't care to hear any of your puny explanations, Mr. Divinney. You are nice, indeed, to invite me to have luncheon with you to celebrate your friend's engagement only because you know this girl will be here to smile at you. You must never speak to me again after you get me home, you brute!

ROBERT—Excuse me a minute. (Rises and signals John to right front.) Say, John, old man, I'm in bad with Bonnie again. Let me have two of those box seats for tonight. I'll get others for you later. (John gives tickets and they return to their seats.)

BONNIE—It was so nice while you were away talking to Mr. Rogers. You are so accommodating sometimes, Mr. Divinney.

ROBERT—I'm so sorry you feel that way about it. You won't want to carry out some plans I had for this evening.

BONNIE—I should say not. (Pause.) Well, you needn't be so mean; you might at least tell me what you had in mind for us.

ROBERT—(Producing tickets and carelessly flipping them with his fingers.) I feel that it is unnecessary now.

BONNIE—(Looking at tickets.) Oh, Robert, you darling! You are so good to think of me for that! I simply could not think of failing to see the Barrymores in that new act. I'm sorry I acted so mean, I—I—

ROBERT—Now, don't say another word—you'll go, won't you?

BONNIE—I'll be charmed!

(Waitress enters left and starts to pass table.)

HIRAM—(Feeling in his pocket.) Well, Miss, what's the damages?

WAITRESS—Sir?

HIRAM—What you got agin me?

WAITRESS—Nothing. You're the kind I like. (Showing his tip.)

HIRAM—I mean what's the charges?

WAITRESS—I don't understand you, sir.

HIRAM—Well, I'll be derved! I thought you was a purty sensible girl, and I think my son here was a kinder gittin' struck on you.

DICK—(Very bashfully.) Now, dad.

HIRAM—I mean, Miss, how much is our bill?

WAITRESS—Oh! (Gives slip.)

HIRAM—(Handing large amount of money.) Here you are. Keep the change fer your own self.

WAITRESS—Oh, thank you—come again!

DICK—(Jumping around and twisting coat and stuffing corner of table cloth in his pocket.) Do you mean me, kiddo?

WAITRESS—Sure, tell them to bring you along too, Johnny.

DICK—Hunkuh, that ain't my name. That's my brother. My name's Richard—Richard Rogers, from Black Stump Valley, Texas—but you can call me Dick, if you want to.

(Waitress exits smiling to left. Dick makes flourishes in elated manner. Lovey starts to rise and screams and falls. Confusion. John and Robert rush to scene.)

JOHN—Father, mother! you again! What has happened?

WORDNA—She has only fainted, I think. Her heart is bothering and the excitement is too much for her.

JOHN—(As he sees his mother recovering.) We must get her out of this. Just a minute. (Leads Robert over toward other party.) I am sorry, Geraldine, but I am needed over here. Robert will escort you home.

MRS. V.—(To Geraldine.) The same woman who was there last night! Can it mean that they are anything to him? It is very unusual, Mr. Rogers, that you should be needed just because a very ordinary woman of the street happens to faint, really!

JOHN—Perhaps so, Mrs. Van Alstyne, but not so unusual when I tell you that this woman is my mother. Good day. (Goes to left, and they carry Lovey out.)

GERALDINE—HIS mother, terrible! I never dreamed they would be so low as that! Why these are the people Miss Howard claimed as her parents—can it be that she was shielding him?

MRS. V.—Thank God, no one saw this except Bonnie and Robert and they will say nothing of it, because they are his friends.

GERALDINE—Mother, this is the last straw—I simply cannot marry him now, ugh!

MRS. V.—But we shall go right down and maybe we can make him send them home. If he doesn't—well maybe this is just the opportunity we have been waiting for.

ROBERT—(Joining them.) Mrs. Van Alstyne, John has asked me to escort you and your daughter home. He is to be detained on account of—

MRS. V.—Yes, on account of a low coarse being whom he calls mother!

ROBERT—You are mistaken there, Mrs. Van Alstyne. Those words, low, coarse, and mother don't go together. There is something sacred in that word mother, whether it signifies the proud matron of a mansion or a poor beggar of the street. Take any crowd of men the world over, real men, I say, and there is one word at which they will reverently raise their hats—and—that—word—is—MOTHER!

ACT IV.

(Scene—John's studio. Office desk at right. Hall tree at back. A few chairs. Lena sits at desk and manicures her nails. Dick at rear watches her unobserved. Lena exits right and Dick goes over to desk.)

DICK—Now, what do you know about that! Ain't she a hummer, though? I got to make a hit with her. Wonder what she's a-doin'. She's a rubbin' her nails jist like I do my shoes when I black 'em. I thought they said black finger nails wasn't the style in the city. (Exit center.)

(John and Lena enter right. She sits at desk.)

JOHN—Finish up that stack of letters and then you may go for the day, and you need not return for a few days. Take a vacation. (Exit right.)

LENA—(Writes on typewriter.) Humph, the boss is kinder blustery today. (Dick appears at back.) Well, I should worry! I'll finsh this work up in short order, and then it's me for the movies.

DICK—(Approaching bashfully, twisting his coat.) How do you do?

LENA—Pretty good, sonny, how are you? Did you wish to see Mr. Rogers?

DICK—Shuckin's, no. I'm his brother.

LENA—Now you're a-tryin' to kid me, bo; maybe you want to be introduced to a cop.

DICK—No, honest Miss, that's who I am, Richard Rogers, form Black Stump Valley, Texas.

LENA—Well you haven't been away from BLACK—STUMP—VALLEY,—TEXAS, long, have you? Aren't you homesick?

DICK—Nah, not while I can be a looking at pretty girls like you.

LENA—(Whirling around in her seat.) Ahem, have a seat. Be easy. I'm afraid you'll twist your coat in two.

DICK—(Sitting.) Have some gum, Miss.

LENA—Thanks, awfully. I was getting so dry I was afraid to open the door, afraid I'd blow away.

DICK—Are you a-workin' fer John, er, I mean Mr. Rogers?

LENA—Uhuh, his secretary.

DICK—Jist write letters fer him, is that all you do?

LENA—(Yawning.) Yeah.

DICK—Jist you and him here all by yourselves?

LENA—Uhuh, most of the time.

DICK—Say, Miss, I'll give you twice as much as John is a-givin' you, if you'll come down ter Black Stump Valley and be mine.

LENA—Your—ah—secretary, of course.

DICK—Uhuh, what you say? Will you?

LENA—Say, what's this you're a feedin' us, Bo? Go on off to the movies and cool your head.

DICK—You come and go with me. Do! Come on, and then we'll go and git something ter eat tergether.

LENA—(Rising and putting on her hat.) Now you're talking, Bo. You're not such a rube as you look. (They exit center.)

LOVEY—(Entering right. Her head is bandaged and she walks unsteadily. She sits at right.) I do wonder where Richard is. I do wish the pore boy would be keerful. I know he'll git lost. (Enter Hiram on run from left. His clothes and hair are tousled and he is breathless. He falls into chair.) Why, Hiram, what on earth has happened?

HIRAM—Now jist hold yer hosses, old woman, and don't

git excited. (He removes his hat, coat and shoes and stretches his feet far in front of him.) I thought I was a-gittin' too old to fight, old woman, but as was a-comin' down the street out there awhile ago I saw a sight that made my blood boil and I forget myself. I had been a walkin' up and down this street out there, backards and forwards, afraid to turn off on any other, afraid I'd git lost agin. And once, jist as I was a turnin' around and lookin' across at all of them people, a baby buggy bumped into me and come purty nigh to knocking me down. I turned around and looked and I'll be blowed, if there wasn't a black nigger a-runnin' off with somebody's white baby. I jumped onto her about it, but she lowed as how she was hired by that there baby's mother to take keer of it. 'Course I knowed she was a-lyin', and I knocked that nigger out into the middle of the street and started on up here with the kid. But I had not gone fer, when a biggoty guy wearin' a blue suit with brass buttons on it started on ter me with a stick. I knocked that feller higher'n a kite, and started to bring the baby on up here. But about that time a whole car full of fellers jist like the first one came a-drivin' up. They told me they was officers, but I didn't believe 'em. But, Lovey, when they got through with me, they made me pay 'em two hundred dollars to keep from goin' to jail.

LOVEY—Oh, Hiram, don't you remember it's a sin to fight. I do wish you wouldn't be so venturesome. Now there's Richard a-follerin' right in your tracks. He's out now, and the Lord only knows where. I'm so afraid the pore boy'll git lost.

HIRAM—(Pause.) How you feelin', old woman?

LOVEY—I ain't a-fellin' very well; think I'll go in here and lay down awhile. (Exits right.)

HIRAM—(Starts to follow; then notices that his suspenders are loose.) Well I'll be John-Browned, if I didn't lose some buttons out there in that little scrimmage awhile ago. Wonder if I could find a pin. (Looks.)

MRS. V.—(Enters center and peers at him through lorgnette.) Sir!!

HIRAM—Oh—er, excuse me, Mum, I, er, got into a little mix-up awhile ago and lost some buttons. Could you loan me a pin?

MRS. V.—I CERTAINLY COULD NOT! Who are you, sir?

HIRAM—Ah, er, excuse me, Mum, Rogers is my name, Hiram Rigers, from Black Stump Valley, Texas. I'm here visitin' my son John. Here's where he stays and plays the fid—er, I mean, the vierlin.

MRS. V.—So he is really your son!

HIRAM—Yep, and who are you? (Holding up glasses as though they were a lorgnette.) You don't happen ter be John's New York girl, are you?

MRS. V.—No, indeed.

HIRAM—Didn't think so. I think they say she's a hum-dinger, all right.

MRS. V.—Oh, THEY do!

HIRAM—Yep, but they say that her old mother is as grouchy as an old settin' hen.

MRS. V.—Oh!!!

GERALDINE—(Enters center.) Mother!

HIRAM—Well I'll be Johnny-jumped-up, if he ain't got a whole house full of 'em. (Enter Lovey right.) Kinder pin up my britches back thar, old woman; I feel kinder skittish with all of these fine women here.

GERALDINE—(Standing horrified with her mother at left.) So that is what he calls parents. You must talk to them, mother.

MRS. V.—Mr. Rogers, I want to tell you and your wife something of utmost importance to your son's happiness. During his stay here in New York he has made for himself friends in society in which you could never associate. He could never present you to his friends and the girl he intends to marry.

HIRAM—You mean ter say, lady, that our son would be ashamed of his old daddy and mammy because we ain't fine enough fer the society he's used to, eh? (Enter Wordna right.)

GERALDINE—Hardly that; but it would ruin his social standing if it should be known that he is of such common birth. And he would never allow his friends to know you.

WORDNA—(Coming forward.) That is false, Miss Van Alstyne.

(Enter John right. Geraldine rushes to him.)

GERALDINE—(Pointing to Wordna.) Oh, John, that horrid creature has just insulted me.

JOHN—Wordna, Miss Howard, can this be true? What do you mean by insulting my promised wife in my own rooms? Leave at once. (Exits right with Geraldine. Wordna exits slowly at left.)

HIRAM—Now, listen, old lady. I'm not sure that I got everything straightened out er not. I believe, though, that your dorter is the girl John is engaged to marry, and you are going ter marry her ter him because you want ter git his money. And now you want us ter give him up and go back to the farm and never see him again fer fear we'll disgrace him—is that it?

MRS. V.—That is about it. Of course, you understand that it is in your son's interest that I speak.

HIRAM—Well, if John wants the old woman and me ter

go back to the farm, we'll do er. But I cain't believe he'll ask us ter do it.

(Re-enter John and Geraldine.)

MRS. V.—Come here daughter. Mr. Rogers, those creatures must be sent back to the farm and given to understand that they must never be seen here again.

JOHN—Why, Mrs. Van Alstyne, what—Geraldine, what have you to say to this?

GERALDINE—It must be as mother says, John.

JOHN—What, turn down the very one's who've made me what I am! Give me my ring. Our engagement is at an end. I wish you good-day.

MRS. V.—And so this is the way you treat those who have been the source of your inspiration!

JOHN—No, Mrs. Van Alstyne, perhaps I have at times felt that your daughter has been my inspiration. But during the most difficult grinding over my work, when the way seemed long and the goal far away, here (taking his mother in his arms) was my inspiration! It has been the remembrance of her abiding faith in my ability, of her sacrifices for me, of her unselfish, watchful care over my boyhood, that has made me struggle with such tenacity to accomplish something worthy of her devotion. During times that are vital to a man, he remembers the one who above all others has been the guiding factor in his life; and the man has a right to be happy when that person is his—MOTHER!

(To low music.)

I remember the days when I sat at her knee
And basked in her loving smile;
I remember the days when she taught me the truth
About things in life worth while;
The days when she taught me to shun all sin
And tread the Narrow Way;
When she taught me to know God's Infinite Plan
And serve him day by day.
And all that is fine and beautiful
Within my life today
But merely reflects her love for me—
My mother, old and gray. (Pause.)

HIRAM—(Holding open door to left.) Ah, excuse me, Mum, my son John wishes you and yore dorter good day.

MRS. V.—You'll hear more of this. (Exit with Ger. left.)

LOVEY—So Wordna was right after all. She told 'em you wouldn't be ashamed of your old father and mother.

JOHN—So that is the way she insulted them!

HIRAM—'s right. She jist up and took mine and the old woman's part. You done that girl a wrong, John.

JOHN—Why did you allow me to act so hastily?

HIRAM—It was all done so tarnation quick I didn't have time ter do nothin' 'cept try ter keep from swallerin' my false teeth! But she'll be all right soon's you explain.

(Telephone rings and John answers.)

JOHN—Hello. Oh, Robert. Come right over. Sure, be glad to have her. Come right away. Say, Robert, come by and bring Miss Howard with you. Tell her it's very important that I see her at once. Good-bye.

DICK—(Enters with Lena left.) Say, John, I want you ter fire this here girl.

JOHN—Why, what's the matter?

DICK—I'm goin' ter take her back ter Black Stump Valley with me.

HIRAM—Why, son, you don't mean ter say yer a-goin' ter git married, do you?

DICK—You bet I do, unless she changes her mind in the next few minutes.

HIRAM—Now, looky here, I cain't agree to this. This here girl would never be satisfied. A person that's been a-livin' on a farm can go to the city and be satisfied, but they ain't no person from the city goin' ter be content ter spend their days on a farm. Besides, this girl don't seem ter be serious—don't seem ter care fer nothin' but frills and chewing gum.

LENA—Yes, I know that we all seem that way, but that's just on the surface. And beneath that is a longing for things worth while. The best that is in us seldom comes to the surface because people don't expect it of us. You usually get from a person just about what you expect. I can remember many years ago of living on a farm where everything was beautiful and where life was not just one hurry and worry. And I want to go back; I'm homesick for folks who care.

HIRAM—Then I guess we'll take you along, little girl. We need 'em like you.

LOVEY—Pore Tiny!

(Re-enter Mrs. V. left.)

MRS. V.—Pardon this intrusion upon this happy family scene, but I must inform you, Mr. Rogers, that I am preparing to file suit against you in my daughter's name for the sum of \$500,000 for breach of promise. (Robert, Wordna and Bonnie appear at back unobserved.)

JOHN—Why, Mrs. Van Alstyne, you don't mean that—you couldn't—

MRS. V.—Don't trouble yourself about my not being able to collect it. You know well enough that my name connected with any suit in New York will be enough to insure the success of it. You will only destroy the fame

you won last evening, if you let this become public. I advise you to pay it and not let it come to court.

HIRAM—Well, I'd give that much to be shut of this critter, John.

ROBERT—(Coming forward.) Don't be too hasty, my dear madam. You see I had been expecting something like this from you. So I looked up the man who really means something to your daughter, George Arnold. I found him broke as usual; so, for a few thousand dollars, I secured this letter, which I think will throw a little light on matters. (Reads.)

Mr. George Arnold.

My Darling George: No, I'm not going to break our engagement just because John Rogers became famous last evening. I am yet hoping that I may find a way to get the money without the man, and I shall consider myself yours till the last. If it comes to the worst, and I must marry him, I'll soon find some excuse for divorce; then we can be together.

Unhappy till I am in your loving arms.

Geraldine.

HIRAM—Er, excuse me, madam, again I have the pleasure of wishing you good-day. (Exit Mrs. V. left.)

(John takes Wordna to right. Dick and Lena to left.)

BONNIE—Now I see why you wanted to bring Miss Howard. Oh, Robert, forgive me and I'll never get jealous again.

ROBERT—That's all right, I knew you'd say that when you understood. But say, let's stop this quarreling and get married today.

JOHN—Say, Robert, I've had my eyes opened to a number of things today, and I realize that here is the only girl I ever loved.

ROBERT—Fine! Say, Bonnie and I have decided to end our relations.

JOHN—What! You're not going to give each other up!

ROBERT—Well hardly—we're going to get married.

JOHN—What do you say to this—let's have a double wedding—

DICK—Say, John, how about three of 'em?

JOHN—Then we'll go down in Texas with father and mother. How long can you be away?

ROBERT—Oh, about three months.

JOHN—Good, we'll spend two weeks down there; then we'll make that tour of Europe which I am invited to make, before we come back to New York.

HIRAM—Come on, folks, and let's git things ready—I'm homesick.

LOVEY—But first let's git them things fer Sofira and Jake. We mustn't fergit our friends down on the farm.

CURTAIN.

THE END.

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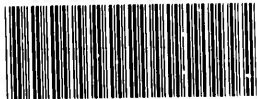
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